

THE MILITANT

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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SWP launches 2023 campaign: Ilona Gersh for Chicago mayor

BY NAOMI CRAINE

CHICAGO — The Socialist Workers Party announced Nov. 29 that it is running Ilona Gersh, a lifelong fighter for the interests of the working class, for mayor of Chicago. Gersh is a bakery worker and member of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union Local 1.

She is challenging a crowded field of varied capitalist candidates in the so-called nonpartisan election, most of whom present themselves as “progressive” Democrats, including incumbent Mayor Lori Lightfoot and Congressman Jesús García.

“Working people need to break with the Democrats, Republicans, and all other capitalist parties,” Gersh told the *Militant*. “We need to build our own party, a labor party, based on our unions, that can organize to fight for our own class interests in face of the economic, social and moral crises of the capitalist system.”

“We will use the campaign to build solidarity with labor struggles,” she added.

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Rail workers fight attacks by bosses and their gov’t

Biden, Pelosi lead Congress to bar right to strike



SMART Journal
Rail workers picket Omaha meeting of Berkshire Hathaway, which owns BNSF railroad, April 30, part of hard-fought battle for livable schedules, paid sick days, control over work conditions.

BY JOE SWANSON

LINCOLN, Neb. — It has become increasingly clear to a growing layer of working people over the last year that the fight of the rail workers and their unions against the profit-driven rail bosses and

their government allies in Washington is a class against class struggle.

All 12 rail unions agreed to strike Dec. 9. “Across each Class 1 railroad system we have strike signs ready in every lodge, phone banks are in place, elected picket captains, mapped-out railroad entrances for picketing,” Jakob Forsgren, a welder, track repair worker and chair of local Lodge 1320 of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees here, told the *Militant*.

The majority of rail workers, and four of the crafts, have voted to reject proposed contracts that far from meet the needs of the workers. Key issues the bosses have refused to address include

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Tehran regime repression fails to stop protests and strikes in Iran



Striking workers at Isfahan iron smelting factory Nov. 26. Unionists have waged a series of strikes against boss, government attacks alongside widespread protests sweeping Iran.

BY SETH GALINSKY

Despite the death of more than 400 protesters and the arrests of thousands, the bourgeois clerical regime in Iran has not been able to stop working people and youth from joining protests and strikes that have swept the country since the death of Mahsa Amini Sept. 16.

The young Kurdish woman died three days after she was detained by the “morality” police for alleged violations of the reactionary dress code.

The regime sent convoys of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Basij thugs to attack demonstrators in the Kurdish region in the northwest, provoking even more protests around the country. The regime also sent heavily armed Revolutionary Guard units to the Iraqi border, launching drone and missile attacks against Iranian-Kurdish groups in Iraqi Kurdistan that the regime falsely claims are fomenting the protests.

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Support Ukraine independence! Moscow troops get out now!

BY ROY LANDERSEN

The Ukrainian people are waging a determined fight to push Moscow’s invading forces out of their country and restore their sovereignty over all Ukraine. The Kremlin’s incessant airstrikes that have targeted vital infrastructure and left 6 million without power have just intensified their resolve.

Russian President Vladimir Putin faces rising opposition at home as a result of the casualties suffered by Russian workers in uniform.

As Moscow continues its bombardments, Ukrainians commemorated the 1932-33 Holodomor, when more than 3 million perished from starvation as a result of policies imposed on the country by the Great-Russian regime of Joseph Stalin. (See article on page 9.)

Today Moscow’s shells are pounding the southern city of Kherson. Residents celebrated the city’s liberation Nov. 11 after Russian forces retreated from the one major regional capital they had seized since the invasion began. Kyiv is organizing train transportation for residents who wish to leave for safer places.

Thousands in the city joined protests after Russian forces seized Kherson at

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UAW calls Dec. 17 ‘Solidarity Day’ for Case strikers

BY NAOMI CRAINE

Striking members of United Auto Workers Local 180 and their supporters are building a “Solidarity Day” for Dec. 17 to press their contract fight against the bosses at Case New Holland. “It’s being broadcast in a lot of places,” Yasin Mahdi, president of Local 180, told the *Militant* Nov. 23. “People will be bringing presents for strikers’ kids and other donations. We’ll meet at the union hall at 2 p.m.” followed by expanded picketing.

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Democrats, antifa push anti-Catholic attacks, bigotry

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Over the last two years there have been at least 170 attacks on Catholic churches across the U.S. In 38 states and the District of Columbia, week after week churches have had services disrupted, windows broken out, bullets shot through doors, or have been spray-painted or set afire.

In October alone four churches were damaged, including by a fire set at St. Patrick’s Parish in Watsonville, California; pro-abortion messages spray-painted on the Church of the Resurrection in Lansing, Michigan; and at Our Lady of Lourdes, in Colusa, California, a vandal did \$10,000 worth of damage, including carving obscenities onto the altar.

Anti-Catholic bigotry has a long

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Nurses in Australia strike for increased staffing, pay raises

Protests, strikes continue in Iran

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“We demand the immediate withdrawal of all oppressive armed forces from Kurdistan and all Kurdish cities and we demand the unconditional release of all prisoners,” the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Workers Union said in a statement Nov. 25, as well as an end to all attacks on the Kurdish region of Iraq. “The workers of Kurdistan are our brothers and sisters.”

Over 200 Sunni clerics, part of the government-recognized religious establishment in the Kurdish region of Iran, read a statement in their mosques Nov. 20 and 21 backing the protests. Sunni religious figures in the Baluchistan region — where the mostly Sunni Baluch, like Kurds, face discrimination by the Shiite-dominated regime — called on the “Shiite clergy and authorities to break their silence” and condemn the repression.

U.S. rulers lie about 1979 revolution

The capitalist press in the United States portrays the reactionary regime in Iran as the product of the 1979 revolution that overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. In fact it came out of a counterrevolution aimed at driving back what working people fought for in 1979.

Like his predecessors, Shah Pahlavi deepened the plunder of Iran by the imperialist powers on the backs of working people. Thousands were tortured over decades by the hated Savak secret police, as the shahs brutally enforced their rule.

Working people were at the forefront of a revolutionary movement of millions that forced Pahlavi to flee the country in 1979. They organized

factory committees, known as shoras, and fought for workers control of job conditions. Oppressed nationalities from Kurds to Arabs fought for equal rights in jobs and schools, including the right to use their own languages. Women forced the regime to back off imposing its dress code for a while, and won the right to participate in and hold office in workers’ shoras.

But without their own independent working-class party, program and leadership, the toilers were not able to bring to power a government of workers and farmers. In 1982 far-reaching repression by the regime of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini made it impossible for communists and other currents in the working class to function.

In 1980, with U.S.-backing, the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq invaded Iran. Defense of the country’s independence was popular and many workers were killed while defending it.

By 1983 the regime consolidated its counterrevolution. Iran’s rulers used their military and economic power to expand their counterrevolutionary reach into Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and divided Kurdistan. But they could not totally push working people out of politics at home.

Mass anti-government protests broke out in 2018 and 2019, showing the depth of working people’s anger toward the regime, including its military adventures abroad. Hundreds were killed by government forces during the demonstrations.

Standing on the shoulders of the 1979 revolution and the 2018 to 2019 protests, recent actions are inspiring thousands of workers to strike for both economic and political reasons.



Mothers of three youth killed by the Iranian regime’s forces during anti-government protests that swept cities and rural towns in 2019, join commemoration of the protests last month.

Some strikers, like other protesters, have taken up the chant of “Down with the dictator.”

On Nov. 26, welders at the Bafgh steel complex in Yazd province struck to protest unsafe conditions after two co-workers were killed in a gas explosion the day before.

The Union of Truckers and Drivers called a strike across the country on Nov. 26, shutting down factories, warehouses, ports and more. Owner-operators say the lack of fuel, the rising price of spare parts and all kinds of fees are making it hard to survive. “The people of Iran live on a sea of oil and gas, but you thieves don’t let anything reach the people,” the union said.

The strike has won solidarity. One farmer told the truck drivers union that even though farmers can’t get their crop to market, “We support these strikes.”

Debate in the ruling class

The inability of the government to stop the protests is widening rifts among factions in the ruling capitalist class.

The government-financed Iranian Student News Agency published a sharp debate Nov. 28 between Hamid Reza Taraqqi, a leader of the Islamic Coalition Party, which is closely allied with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei’s party, and Ali Bagheri, the regime’s deputy foreign minister, who is allied

with the “reformist” wing of the capitalist rulers.

Bagheri claimed he supports the slogan “Women, life, freedom,” which is popular at protests, but says “malicious elements” at demonstrations must be separated from the actions and treated as “enemies.”

Taraqqi called “Women, life, freedom” a slogan of supporters of Kurdish separatists and a cry to impose “a Western way of life,” which the government can’t tolerate.

The protests are impacting all classes in Iran. On Nov. 21, 250 translators in Iran issued a statement. “We will not return to the past,” it said. Together with millions of people across Iran they call for “the right to free speech and thought, to freedom of assembly and to freely choose a democratic government.”

Donate your California gas-tax rebate to the ‘Militant’!

The California government is issuing payouts to state residents to “provide relief” from high gas prices. Put it to good use! Send it to the *Militant* to help us keep getting out the truth about the capitalist crisis and the road forward for working people. So far, we’ve received \$5,020. Mail checks to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018 or donate online at themilitant.com

THE MILITANT

‘Militant’ answers myth of overpopulation

As world population reached 8 billion in November, “experts” claimed there are too many people. The ‘Militant’ says we need more people to strengthen the working class, and to use science and labor to meet the needs of society, not the profits of the bosses.

American Philosophical Society
Pro-eugenics panel members assess “human stock” at the 1925 Kansas state fair.

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Telephone: (212) 244-4899
Fax: (212) 244-4947
E-mail: themilitant@mac.com
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Bosses, gov’t attack rail workers

Continued from front page

livable schedules and hours, increasingly dangerous working conditions, time off when needed, paid sick days and an end to onerous attendance policies.

Meanwhile, the rail barons have raked in record profits, made unprecedented payouts to investors and raised prices on shippers. Their coalition — the National Carriers’ Conference Committee — rejects any further negotiations, relying on their friends in Washington to use the notorious anti-labor Railway Labor Act to quash any strike action and force the rejected contract down workers’ throats.

President Joseph Biden obliged Nov. 28, saying he would ask Congress to take bipartisan action to bar a strike and impose the contract. While claiming he was a “proud pro-labor president,” Biden proved his real sympathies, saying, “I believe Congress must use its power to adopt this deal.”

Democratic Party leader Nancy Pelosi put on the same act. Announcing she would put a strikebreaking motion on the floor of the House Nov. 30, she then masqueraded as a “friend of labor,” saying, “We must recognize that railroads have been selling out to Wall Street to boost their bottom lines, making obscene profits while demanding more and more from railroad workers.” Then she said her bill wouldn’t contain any “changes to the negotiated terms” — that is, terms voted down by the majority of rail workers.

Republican leaders let on they’d be glad to pitch in. Sen. Roger Wicker from Mississippi praised Biden for “the big boy thing to do.”

These announcements came just a few hours after the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Manufacturers, National Retail Federation and hundreds of other boss associations wrote to Congress to demand they intervene and block a strike.

Rail bosses responded to the moves in Washington with glee. “Congress has historically acted with haste in a highly bipartisan manner and that’s our goal again here,” Association of American Railroads Chief Executive Ian Jefferies said.

The fight continues

Many workers are angry. “National media coverage misrepresented the gains in the contract as a victory,” Jordan Boone, a SMART-TD conductor in Galesburg, Illinois, told the *Militant*. “Workers feel like they’ve been wronged. Why vote for something that we don’t 100% like. Some of us would rather be forced by Congress to take something than vote to take something we are not on board with.”

As the crisis of capitalism deepens, bosses are turning to their governments to break strikes in a number of countries. The day after Biden proclaimed his strike-breaking plan, Yoon Suk-ye-

ol, president of South Korea, announced he had invoked strike-busting laws to issue an unprecedented back-to-work order on 2,500 striking cement truck drivers. Failure to comply could lead to revocation of driving licenses, massive fines and three years in jail.

The union responded with 16 rallies around the country, saying they intended to defy the start-work order. (See article on page 5.)

After the Canadian provincial government in Ontario passed Bill 28, a draconian anti-strike law, some 55,000 school workers defied it and went on strike for two days in the beginning of November. They were backed by widespread solidarity actions. The government blinked, and Premier Douglas Ford announced the law would be rescinded, including the threat of retaliation against workers and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, their union. Negotiations resumed and workers are voting on a contract offer now, threatening to strike again if it’s voted down.

These examples teach important lessons. A law is just a piece of paper. The class struggle and relationship of class forces are what decides if anti-union government moves can be enforced.

How can rail workers best advance their fight against the bosses and their government here? Supporters of the *Militant* who work on the railroad and elsewhere are asking their co-workers, what do you think rail workers need to do?

“No one wants to strike but it’s the only tool labor unions have. We’re not asking for more than having some time off to spend with our families without being harassed by the boss instead of on call 24/7,” Lance Anton, a SMART-TD member and conductor here in Lincoln, told this *Militant* correspondent. “It’s not like the railroads can’t afford to let us have time off with the billions of profits they make each year. They are the ones holding consumers’ and shippers’ feet to the fire, not union members. If your



Lori Meyer

Rail workers held protest on overpass in Lincoln, Nebraska, Nov. 2 to show BNSF Railway CEO Katie Farmer, who was passing by on a train, that they were ready to fight for better contract.

house is on fire, you call firefighters. The rail unions are the firefighters against the railroad employers’ repressive attendance policies, increasing harassment and unsafe working conditions.

“I voted no on the proposed agreement, too much was left up to future negotiations, railroad by railroad,” he said. “We need to fight nationally, use our union power.

“The reason over 60% of the yardmen in the SMART-TD voted against the proposed agreement,” he pointed out, “is because of increasing harassment against the workers who make up the trains in the yard. They’re constantly under the eyes of rail bosses hiding in the weeds, spy cameras and drones all to push speedup and an unsafe work environment. And if you put in a personal injury report, intimidation from the bosses increases.”

Anton joined fellow rail workers to collect over 30 signatures from co-workers on a message of solidarity sent to the Canadian Union of Public Employees school workers in Ontario.

“Their fight needs to be emulated by the U.S. rail unions against the anti-labor laws of the U.S. government that only aid the railroad employers,” Anton said.

There is interest and solidarity with

rail workers from fight-minded workers and farmers. “It’s not only the rail workers who are being abused,” Perry Stevenson, a Lincoln truck driver and member of Teamsters Local 554, told the *Militant*. “We are so short of drivers, the boss pressures us to break the 14-hours-of-service law limit daily. My union has been fighting for more time off for two years. I support rail workers in their fight to win their quality-of-life goals.”

Larry Ginter, a veteran farmer activist from Rhodes, Iowa, advocates the need for an alliance of working farmers and unionists to back the rail workers. “I think city folks are allies of working farmers. They make what we need to produce the food that feeds the country and others around the world,” he said. “I believe that workers need a living wage and farmers need to make enough to meet the cost of production and take care of their families. If the rail workers need to strike to get their demands met, so be it.”

It is through being part of the resistance taking place today, and building solidarity, that workers can learn and prepare for the bigger battles to come. This is the road to strengthen the labor movement to act in the interests of all working people.

Democrats, antifa boost anti-Catholic attacks, bigotry

Continued from front page

history in the United States. Catholics were a central target of the Ku Klux Klan in the Midwest and other parts of the country in the 1920s. The Klan had over 5 million members at its high point.

Thirty-seven states today have some form of the anti-Catholic “Blaine Amendment” on their books. These have their origin in 19th century campaigns against the rapidly growing Irish Catholic population. They bar any state funding for religious schools, but were only enforced against Catholics.

In a victory for constitutional rights, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 21 that Maine couldn’t exclude religious schools from a state program that pays tuition fees for children to attend private schools in areas where there are no public schools. The state had refused to pay these fees for religious private schools.

Anti-Catholic bigotry challenges the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which says, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Defense of constitutional freedoms like this, including free speech, the right to assemble and more, are cru-

cial for working people who *use* them to fight boss and government attacks.

Today anti-Catholic prejudice is being whipped up by Democrats and the middle-class left, who argue the “main threat to democracy” comes from “semi-fascists” and the far right, including Catholics who they smear as reactionary.

“The Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade at a time when it has an unprecedented Catholic supermajority,” The Associated Press complained June 30 in an article entitled “Anti-Roe justices a part of Catholicism’s conservative wing.”

While acknowledging that the 71 million Catholics in the U.S. have a wide range of opinions on abortion, the article pounds away at the six justices who “were raised Catholic.”

Justice Amy Coney Barrett is a special target of leftists, who insist she seeks to impose her religious and moral agenda through her votes in court cases.

Nowhere in the AP article does it explain that the Dobbs ruling is based on a reading of the Constitution, not on religious belief. Or that the decision neither bars nor restricts abortions, but turns this decision over to the people in each state and their elected officials.

Illinois Democratic State Sen. Sara Feigenholtz jumped on the anti-Catholic bandwagon in June, changing her Facebook profile to an image of a Catholic pope or bishop holding a gun to the head of a pregnant Statue of Liberty.

These prejudices lead to far-reaching attacks against Catholic churches and the right of Catholics to worship as they please.

There are 600 Catholic hospitals in the U.S. and more than 1,500 Catholic-affiliated long-term health facilities, many of them in rural and inner-city communities the capitalists’ profit-driven health system largely ignores. Some of these have been hit with graffiti or worse.

President Joseph Biden appointees at the Department of Health and Human Services are seeking to add provisions to the Affordable Care Act that would bar health care workers from opting out of performing procedures such as abortions or gender-change surgeries that violate their beliefs.

Defending the right to worship freely — and fighting anti-Catholic bigotry, as well as Jew-hatred, attacks against Muslims and other assaults on religious freedom — is a crucial part of unifying the working class.

Read about the battles that forged the US labor movement

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Book fair in Sulaymaniyah shows gains in Kurdish national struggle

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

SULAYMANIYAH, Kurdistan Region, Iraq — The 10-day Sulaymaniyah International Book Fair ended Nov. 26, drawing tens of thousands of people eager to get their hands on books in Kurdish, English and Arabic. Busloads of students and schoolchildren walked up and down aisles, as did workers, teachers, families, and groups of friends.

The fourth annual book fair here registered advances in the Kurdish national struggle for self-determination. Some 30 million Kurds in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey make up the world's largest nation without their own country. Amid social, economic and political disorder resulting from decades of tyrannical bourgeois rule and U.S.-led military assaults, Kurds have established an autonomous region and government in northeast Iraq.

According to book fair organizers, over half the 200 publishers with booths were Kurdish. Others came from elsewhere in Iraq, other majority-Arab countries, as well as Iran and Turkey. A large stand featured publishers from the Kurdish region of Iran, including books on its history of struggle. Another had books in Arabic and Kurdish from northeast Syria. A third promoted the legacy of Yilmaz Guney, a Kurdish writer and filmmaker from Turkey.

"Year after year Kurdish publishing is increasing," Simko Mohammad, a

member of the fair's organizing committee, told the *Militant*. "This is a cultural advance. There are more writers."

"We want the public, too," Mohammad said, "We want to bring Kurds together from everywhere. But we face barriers of geography and security."

This effort takes place as Kurds in Iran carry out protests and strikes against the bourgeois-clerical government in Tehran. These actions combine the Kurdish people's fight for national self-determination and the struggle of working people of all nationalities against that repressive regime.

In recent weeks, both the Iranian and Turkish governments have stepped up military attacks on Kurds. Tehran has launched deadly attacks on protesters in Iran, and missile assaults on Kurdish-Iranian organizations based in Iraqi Kurdistan. Ankara has bombed Kurdish towns in both Iraq and Syria. Baghdad and the Kurdish Regional Government in Erbil have protested these violations of Iraq's sovereignty, at the same time promising these two regional bullies to clamp down on exile groups.

These events, central to world politics, were on the minds of those who talked with volunteers at the Pathfinder Books stand, which featured books by communists and other working-class leaders. This was the fourth time the London distributor of books from New York-based Pathfinder Press participat-



Militant/Ögmundur Jónsson

Pathfinder volunteer Jim White, center, at Sulaymaniyah book fair, Nov. 17-26. Developments in the region and world politics boosted interest in books on lessons of revolutionary struggles.

ed in a book fair in the Kurdistan region.

What's happening in Iran is not just a women's movement, said university student Nwa Abdullah, "but also a Kurdish movement and a movement for freedom all over Iran."

The struggles of Kurds in Iraq and Iran have been intertwined across history. Many have family or other links on both sides of the border imposed by these capitalist states, a mere 70-mile drive from Sulaymaniyah. A worker at a print shop turned out to be from Saqqez, the hometown of Jina Amini. She showed us videos on her phone of ongoing protests.

A book fair participant got a firsthand report from the Ekbatan area of Tehran Nov. 20, after a brutal government crackdown in Mahabad and other Kurdish cities. People were chanting "Mahabad, Kurdistan, setting example for Iran" into the night. Other fairgoers smiled and said they had heard this was being chanted elsewhere in Iran, too.

A long view of history

Many were interested in Pathfinder books to get a historic perspective on these events. The top seller was *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity* (97 copies) by Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and U.S. Socialist Workers Party leaders George Novack and Mary-Alice Waters. "Without understanding how human society, since our remotest ancestors, has been created through social labor," Waters explains, "working people remain prisoners of the capitalist epoch in which we live."

Some people knew Pathfinder from three book fairs it attended in Erbil in 2017-19 and from the Haval Bookstore there, which displays Pathfinder titles. Young people often brought others to the stand. Among them was Shadan Ahmed, a newly graduated lawyer.

"U.S. attacks on Iraq were terrible," Ahmed said, referring to the 1990-91 Gulf War and 2003 U.S.-led invasion. "As a Kurd, I also know that amid those conditions we fought to win freedom. Of course, it's not real freedom, because we still have capitalism." She picked up a copy of *New International* magazine featuring the article "Washington's Assault on Iraq: Opening Guns of World War III" by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes.

"Will there be a revolution?" Ahmed asked. She was glad to hear that the same book discusses leadership lessons from the 1979 revolution that overthrew the shah in Iran and the subsequent bourgeois counterrevolution. It reviews the record of a communist party that

functioned in Iran from 1979 to 1982, fighting for a working-class course, including its backing for struggles by Kurds and other oppressed nationalities.

Questions of class politics

"I need your books about capitalism," student Meer Hammza said as he bought *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?* by Barnes and *The Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels. "Here they promote capitalist ideas," he said, "but I don't think it's the right way." Both titles sold out. Recognition of the brutal realities of capitalism was evident, including growing class divisions and worsening conditions for working people in the Kurdistan region itself.

This was reflected in sales of six copies of *The Turn to Industry: Forging a Proletarian Party* by Barnes. A socialist revolution in the U.S., the SWP leader says, is "inconceivable *without organizing our class to fight to build unions and to use union power to advance the interests of working people here and around the world.*" And forging a proletarian party to change which class exercises state power "is impossible without participating in that struggle."

Titles on the roots of women's oppression and the fight for liberation were in such high demand that most also sold out. These included *Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women* (23 sold) by SWP leaders Joseph Hansen, Evelyn Reed and Waters; *Women and the Family* (six) by Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky; and *Problems of Women's Liberation* (17) and *Sexism and Science* (nine), both by Reed. The last two titles, as well as *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?* were on sale for the first time in Arabic. Beirut-based Nousous Publications, which translated and published them, says they've been well received in Lebanon.

Also popular was *The Jewish Question* (36) by Abram Leon. Many bought it after learning Pathfinder had issued a new edition, with a 2020 introduction by SWP leader Dave Prince, in response to a renewed worldwide spread of anti-Semitic venom and violent assault on Jews.

Simko Mohammad told the *Militant* that book fair organizers aim to keep improving. "Next year I hope there will be even more variety and acceptance of different ideas."

"The Kurdish people have sacrificed a lot," he said. "There have been many killings. But we aspire for more advancement for our people. We don't make excuses. We compare our cultural level with people all over the world."

Book fair marked by solidarity with Iranian protests



Shafaq News

SULAYMANIYAH — While browsing at the Pathfinder booth at the book fair, student Nwa Abdullah described a Sept. 28 demonstration here, above, in solidarity with protests in Iran, shortly after the killing of Jina Amini. The demonstration was attacked by riot police using tear gas, as was a demonstration in Erbil.

"Attacking a peaceful demonstration is not a sign of strength, but fear," she said. "You have to ask, why do they fear us?"

Abdullah said she used to associate traditional Kurdish men's clothes with "patriarchy." But she was glad to see men dressed like that at the demonstration. "I've had to rethink my earlier reaction."

A cement factory worker, Muhamad, talked about working conditions. He asked to use only his first name. "Conditions are getting worse," he said, "especially wages. There's too much inflation. Bosses don't follow laws on safety.

"But the problem is the unions have shrunk. Older workers tell me they used to be stronger in the past. Today many function more like part of the Labor Ministry than real unions."

At the offices of the Kurdistan United Workers Union, a couple of us met Bryar Azad Ibrahim, who went to the union for help in his fight for reinstatement after being sacked from his job at a cement depot.

"I was fired after a manager said I had called back a truck by mistake, even though he was the one who had told me to," Ibrahim said. "I have a contract, and the procedure is that if you make a mistake, you first get a warning and then a fine before they can fire you."

I told Ibrahim this sounded familiar. Bosses in the U.K. and elsewhere want to be able to fire workers without notice, and use temp agencies and contractors to get away with doing this "legally." But workers can win jobs back, I added, especially when we organize and fight through our unions.

— Ö.J.

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

South Korean truckers strike for living wage, safety

Some 25,000 owner-operator truck drivers in South Korea kicked off their second major strike in less than six months Nov. 24, affecting manufacturing, construction and fuel supplies in the world's 10th-largest economy. Cement-truck drivers joining the action face a government decree ordering them back to work.

"Let's stop driving, to change the world!" chanted hundreds of truckers as they marched around a depot at Uiwang, south of Seoul.

With fuel costs soaring, the central issue in the strike is truckers' demand that the government make permanent the Safe Trucking Freight Rates, established during the pandemic and due to expire at the end of the year.

"The Safe Rates system sets minimum rates of pay for truck drivers who own their own trucks, ensuring that they can cover the costs of operating their vehicles and make a decent living," Wol-san Liem, vice chairperson of the International Transport Workers' Federation, Road Transport Section, told the *Militant* by phone. It "alleviates pressures on them to speed, overload their vehicles and drive long hours while fatigued."

"The system currently covers only drivers who carry bulk cement or containers," said Liem. "The vast majority of Korean truck drivers believe the system should be made permanent and its coverage expanded."

The truckers' union reports that

700 people die in truck accidents every year.

The Cargo Truckers Solidarity Union, which is organizing the strike, estimated 22,000 of its 25,000 members participated in 16 rallies across the country on the first day of the action.

In June, truckers ended an eight-day strike after the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport agreed to extend the Safe Rates system and said it would discuss its expansion to other drivers.

But now "the government is backtracking on its promise, to the detriment of workers and public safety," Bongju Lee, president of the Korean Federation of Public Service and Transport Workers' Union, Truckers Solidarity Division, told the press. "We are prepared to strike until that changes. It's as simple as that."

As cement shipments have dropped, concrete laying has halted at hundreds of building sites. South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol signed an executive order Nov. 29 instructing 2,500 cement-truck drivers to return to work, the first time that such an order has been used against striking transport workers. Failure to comply can result in the revocation of a trucker's license and three years in jail, or a fine.

The executive order "threatens truckers with the loss of their livelihood," Wol-san Liem said. "This is a violation of truckers' freedom of association and truckers will not back down."

At one of the rallies the union organized Nov. 29, Bongju Lee said strikers will defy the order.

— Chris Hoeppepner



Hundreds of the 25,000 striking unionized truckers march in Uiwang, South Korea, Nov. 24, one of 16 nationwide rallies that day. South Korean government is trying to force them back to work. Signs demand a guaranteed minimum rate, safer working conditions.

Two days later thousands of nurses walked out in the state of Western Australia over similar demands. It was their first strike in 24 years, with more than 3,000 marching in Perth, the capital.

Nurses unions in both states defied their governments' Industrial Relations Commissions, which had ordered them to call off the actions. Nurses and midwives would not be "gagged," said Janet Reah, secretary of the Australian Nurses Federation of Western Australia.

"I realized after our first strike I was not alone," Melissa Mansell told the rally here. She is an emergency nurse at Sydney's Liverpool Hospital and president of its New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association branch. We are fighting for "better working conditions for ourselves, and

a better health system for the people of New South Wales."

Nurses across the state are demanding a nurse-to-patient ratio of 1-to-3 in emergency departments and maternity wards, and 1-to-4 elsewhere.

"Safe Hospitals for Rural People," read a placard carried by Paul Haines, who works at Yass Hospital some 40 miles north of Canberra. There were "few nurses, and sometimes no doctor" at the hospital, he said. "We are often left on our own." So-called telehealth is common, he said, with a doctor "trying to make a diagnosis" and decide on treatment "over the phone."

"Working people need to get together and show solidarity," said postal worker Vincent Molina, who joined the Sydney rally.

— Bob Aiken and Janet Roth

Dec. 17 'Solidarity Day' at Case

Continued from front page

Six hundred UAW members at the Case New Holland plant near Racine, Wisconsin, walked out May 2, along with 430 members of UAW Local 807 at the heavy equipment manufacturer's plant in Burlington, Iowa. They are fighting for raises that keep up with inflation, against massive mandatory overtime, and against company

demands to increase the cost of their medical insurance.

Mahdi said that the last negotiations were in late September and "there was no real movement" from what the company called its "last, best, final offer."

"My biggest problem was the mandatory 12-hour shifts," striking tool and die maker Tony Marnell told the *Militant* by phone. He said strikers are keeping up the picket line daily 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. As the weather gets colder, they've cut the picket shifts from six hours to four, and set up a tent with a heater where strikers can warm up.

The company is running some production with replacement workers and a few union members who've crossed the line. "They're now bringing in the workers in vans at the gate by the guard shack," Marnell said. "It seems like the company turned down the lights in that area. With it getting dark earlier, I'm picketing with a flashlight, to make sure we're visible on the picket line."

The strikers continue to win support in the community and beyond. Other unions and individuals stop by the union hall and picket line to bring donations of food and other items.

"I don't think most people thought it would last over six months," Marnell said. "The people who've been at it for this long are in it for the long haul. We want to get back to work, but with a fair contract."

Contributions, messages of support and checks can be dropped off or mailed to the Local 180 union hall at 3323 Kearney Ave., Mt. Pleasant, WI 53403, and to Local 807 at 9313 Koestner St., Burlington, IA 52601.

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25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



December 15, 1997
SYDNEY — Prime Minister John Howard has moved to curtail Aboriginal land rights. His proposed amendments to the Native Title Act have been met by protest rallies and public meetings in defense of the customary land use rights — such as hunting, fishing, camping, and access to ceremonial sites — of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, the indigenous peoples of Australia.
Some 200 Aborigines, representing 11 tribes from across the remote Kimberley region of Western Australia, protested October 6 at a hearing called by the parliamentary committee examining the bill. "Extinguish our title and you extinguish our people," declared the Kimberley Aborigines in their submission to the hearing.
Aborigines, who make up less than 2 percent of the population, comprise the most oppressed section of Australian society.



December 15, 1972
NEW YORK — At 12:01 a.m., Nov. 30, 5,000 members of 12 unions closed down the Long Island Rail Road. The unions represent carmen, Teamsters, clerks, electrical workers, sheet-metal workers, and other "nonoperating employees," as well as some supervisors. The picket lines were respected by the 1,500 trainmen of the United Transportation Union and the members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.
The last strike called by any of the dozen craft unions against the railroad was in 1922. The primary issue for the striking workers is wage parity with the trainmen.
The workers are displeased with their current pension system, since the LIRR is part of the Metropolitan Transit Authority, whose bus and subway workers, while receiving comparable wages for similar work, have a better pension system that is less expensive to the workers.



December 15, 1947
The Truman Administration last week exerted further efforts to whip up the red scare to the pitch of hysteria by publishing a list of so-called "subversive" organizations, including the Socialist Workers Party.
The blacklist is part of the red-baiting campaign designed as a cover for the Big Business-government attacks on the labor movement and the civil liberties of the American people.
The Dec. 7 *N.Y. Times* admits, "Although the list included right-wing groups, it was conceded privately that these were 'window-dressing,' that the real targets of the loyalty check were Communists and their sympathizers."
And ultimately the target is the entire labor movement, which stand as the potentially greatest barrier to the designs of the Wall Street war-makers and their government.

International conference discusses conditions facing overseas Chinese, US-Beijing conflict

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

SAN FRANCISCO — Conditions facing Chinese in the United States and around the world coping with the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and the sharpening conflicts between Washington and Beijing was the theme of this year’s conference of the International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas, held here Nov. 11-12.

The event was attended by some 150 people, overwhelmingly university professors and students specializing in the history of the Chinese population in the countries where they live. They came from the U.S., Canada, and countries ranging from Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines to Chile, France and South Africa.

After almost three years of pandemic-related travel bans and lockdowns worldwide, this was the first international ISSCO conference since 2019. For ISSCO members in China who could not attend the San Francisco event because of ongoing travel restrictions, a parallel conference was organized at Jinan University in Guangzhou, China, attended by some 200 people. The five plenary sessions in San Francisco were transmitted live to Jinan.

Lok Siu, head of the conference organizing committee and chair of the Asian American Research Center at the University of California at Berkeley, welcomed participants to the gathering, which marked ISSCO’s 30th anniversary.

“Our founding conference was held here in San Francisco in 1992,” said Ling-chi Wang, a retired U.C. Berkeley professor and longtime ISSCO leader, speaking at a special “Founders Roundtable” program. “It was not possible before the end of the Cold War and the 1992 Consensus between China and Taiwan,” he explained, referring to an agreement between those two governments that for the first time allowed exchanges across the Taiwan Strait.

Since then, ISSCO has held conferences in countries from Singapore to New Zealand, Cuba, Panama and Denmark.

Plenary sessions and workshops took up an array of topics concerning the 40 million people of Chinese ancestry living outside China. The subjects ranged from the Chinese community in the Philippines under Spanish colonial rule to Chinese migrants in Africa today.

Opposing scapegoating of Asians

The dominant threads running throughout the conference sessions, however, were the scapegoating of Chinese for the COVID pandemic and the impact of the Washington-Beijing conflict on Chinese in the United States and elsewhere. Many speakers expressed concern and fear that overseas Chinese are increasingly under attack by government security agencies and targets of individual acts of violence, especially in the U.S.

Plenaries and workshops took up topics such as “The Pandemic and Anti-Asian Violence in the U.S.,” “Global Sinophobia in the Era of COVID-19” and instances of anti-Asian discrimination in various countries, such as Co-

lombia and South Africa.

The highlight of the gathering was a plenary session on “Racial Profiling and Discrimination against Chinese American Scientists and Engineers.” It featured three scientists — Sherry Chen, Xiaoxing Xi and Gang Chen — who explained how they fought back against false U.S. government charges that they had spied for the Chinese government (see article below).

Sherry Chen, a hydrologist at the National Weather Service, described how FBI agents arrested her in 2014 on false charges of “economic espionage,” threatening her with 25 years in prison, and how she waged a successful fight against the frame-up.

Xiaoxing Xi, a physicist at Temple University, and Gang Chen, a professor of engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, explained how armed FBI agents had burst into their homes and arrested them — Xi in 2015 and Chen in 2021 — in front of their terrified families. They fought back, winning public support, and defeated government efforts to frame them up. In both cases, as with Sherry Chen, federal prosecutors eventually dropped all charges — without apology or compensation for their legal and other costs.

Jeremy Wu, founder of the Asian Pacific American Justice Task Force, explained that numerous Chinese American scientists have been targeted on espionage charges under the past three administrations. Sherry Chen and Xiaoxing Xi were arrested during



Opening of Int'l Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas conference in San Francisco Nov. 11. Organizer Lok Siu, chair of U.C. Berkeley Asian American Research Center, welcomes participants from around the world.

the Barack Obama administration. The “China Initiative,” a witch hunt program launched in 2018 by the Justice Department under the Donald Trump administration, was officially dropped in February this year in face of protests by Asian American and civil liberties groups, but the Biden administration has continued to pursue prosecutions.

Wu paid tribute to the three scientists on the panel for their courage. Their example shows that “we need to stand up, speak out, and be engaged,” he said. “Asian Americans by ourselves are not enough to win these fights. We need to reach out and look for allies, especially among the younger generations.”

In the discussion period, Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press, took the floor. Waters is editor of *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*, which she has presented at numerous previous ISSCO conferences. “You are not alone. You have allies, especially in the working class,” Waters

said. “It’s not just Asian Americans whose constitutional rights are being violated today.”

She pointed to how the FBI was transformed into a federal political police agency by an executive order of President Franklin Roosevelt in 1939, as Washington was preparing to enter the second imperialist world war. The FBI framed up and jailed leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and the Minneapolis Teamsters, which were a powerful component of the rising industrial unions and were organizing opposition to the U.S. rulers’ imperialist war aims.

Over the course of the conference, many participants came to the Pathfinder table to get books on this and other questions of U.S. and world politics, and to discuss them with supporters of Pathfinder Press.

Debate on U.S.-China conflict

The final conference session was on “Changing U.S.-China Relations and Their Impact on Chinese in the U.S. and Elsewhere.”

to a crime I didn’t commit,” she said. “One week before my trial, the prosecutors dropped the charges” without explanation, Chen said. “But the night-



Sherry Chen in 2018 after court ruling that her firing from the National Weather Service on espionage charges was a “gross injustice.”

mare was not over. Instead of apologizing, the U.S. Commerce Department [which runs the Weather Service] terminated me on the same charges.” Ignoring advice from colleagues to give up, Chen filed a lawsuit for her wrongful prosecution and firing and a judge ordered her reinstatement. The Commerce Department appealed.

Finally, on Nov. 10, on the eve of the ISSCO meeting, Chen won a settlement of more than \$1.5 million in damages. In addition, the Commerce Depart-

ment has agreed to provide her with a letter recognizing her accomplishments during her years at the Weather Service. “This was a big win for me, for the Chinese American community, and for the rule of law,” Chen told the audience to a standing ovation.

Also speaking on the panel were Xiaoxing Xi and Gang Chen. In 2015 Xi, chair of the physics department at Temple University, was arrested in front of his wife and two daughters by heavily armed FBI agents who burst into their home at dawn. Federal prosecutors charged him with illegally sending trade secrets to China — the design of a superconductor device known as a pocket heater — and threatened him with 80 years in prison.



Xiaoxing Xi, Temple University physics department chair. He fought FBI frame-up, won public support, and charges were dropped.



Reuters/Pichi Chuang

Students in Taiwan in 2015 protest textbooks saying country is part of China. ISSCO conference panel on U.S.-China conflict sparked debate on U.S. imperialism’s efforts to maintain domination of the Pacific, Beijing’s attempts to gain control over Taiwan.

The backdrop to the panel discussion was the ongoing efforts of the U.S. imperialist rulers to maintain their domination of the Pacific in face of competition from Beijing and its growing military reach. President Joseph Biden has declared that Washington will respond militarily to any aggression by the Chinese regime seeking to end the independence of Taiwan. Beijing has fortified armed outposts on Pacific island chains claimed by other governments, including Tokyo, Hanoi and Manila. It has cracked down harshly on political opposition in Hong Kong and on the predominantly Muslim Uyghur minority in Xinjiang, western China.

Departing sharply from the tone of an academic exchange of ideas, the panelists insisted that Washington is already well advanced in preparations for going to war against Beijing. They argued that the Chinese government’s foreign policy is based on a justifiably defensive response to such threats. “China wants a multilateral world,

but the U.S. wants a unilateral world. That leads to conflict,” said Don Tow, president of the New Jersey Alliance for Learning and Preserving the History of World War II in Asia.

“The U.S. plan is to provoke war” with Beijing, stated K.J. Noh, a radical online commentator and member of the advisory group of Friends of Socialist China. In fact, he said, “the U.S. is already at war with China.” This is “because China stood up” to U.S. imperialism. “Taiwan is a pawn of the U.S. Its independence would be a threat to China,” he argued.

Noh asserted that accusations of repression by Beijing against the Uyghur people are a fabrication — part of Washington’s “hybrid warfare” — designed to tarnish the Chinese government’s “development program” in Xinjiang.

“There is no nation or country of Taiwan — it’s a place” and it belongs to the People’s Republic of China, stated Gordon Chang, a professor at Stanford University.

“People in Taiwan are indoctrinated” to oppose coming under the rule of the Beijing government, said George Koo, a writer for the online Asia Times. Echoing a charge made by those who oppose Ukraine’s battle to defend its national independence against Moscow’s invasion, Koo argued that “the U.S. is pushing Taiwan toward a firefight with China, just like it pushed Ukraine against Russia.”

The aggressive tone and content of the panelists’ remarks did not go unchallenged, and applause for their arguments diminished as the session went on, registering the fact that many in attendance did not agree with much of what was said.

“I don’t see Taiwan as a pawn of the U.S.,” said one audience member who took the floor in the discussion period. “Also, we know the Chinese state conducts surveillance of Chinese overseas.”

“China has never renounced the use of force against Taiwan,” said Andy Wang, a professor at the Academia Sinica in Taipei. “Using force would be a big step toward war.”

Speaking informally after the session, Wang noted that today the big majority of people in his native Taiwan, especially among younger generations, do not want to live under Beijing’s boot.

At the conclusion of the two-day event, many participants said it was a much-needed opportunity, after a

Workers in China protest COVID-19 lockdowns



Reuters/Thomas Peter

In unprecedented defiance of the Chinese government’s iron-fisted zero-COVID lockdowns, which have confined millions and left many hungry, demonstrations erupted across the country Nov. 26-27. This followed protests in Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang province, the day before. After months of lockdowns there, an apartment building fire enraged residents over COVID restrictions that blocked rescuers from saving the lives of 10 people.

The eruption comes after thousands of workers in Zhengzhou at the world’s biggest iPhone factory protested Nov. 22 over pay, unsafe working conditions and the lockdown there that confined workers to the plant. Thousands joined actions in Shanghai and Beijing (above), swelled by hundreds of students at universities from Nanjing to the capital. A slogan in Shanghai was “Unlock Xinjiang, unlock China!” At several protests chants included, “Xi Jinping, step down! Communist Party, step down!” This is an unprecedented challenge to the social controls of President Xi’s capitalist regime. Some held up sheets of blank paper or some featuring only an exclamation point inside a red circle, the symbol state censors use to block internet postings.

At the iPhone plant, Han Li, a new worker, told the *New York Times*, “We protested the whole day, from day to night.” Police and company goons beat and detained a number of workers.

The plant, operated by Taiwan-based Foxconn Technology Group, employs over 200,000 workers and makes most of Apple’s iPhone 14. Under the government’s zero-COVID policy, Foxconn forced workers to live on factory premises with no outside contact. Thousands quit in October.

In an effort to recruit workers to replace those who left, Foxconn promised to pay 25,000 yuan (\$3,500) for new hires’ first two months’ work. But the company reneged. “Workers from all parts of the country came, only to find they were being made fools of,” Li Sanshan, one of those newly hired, told *The Associated Press*.

Protests broke out in the face of the lockdown, including in some cases being forced to share dormitory rooms with those who tested positive for COVID-19.

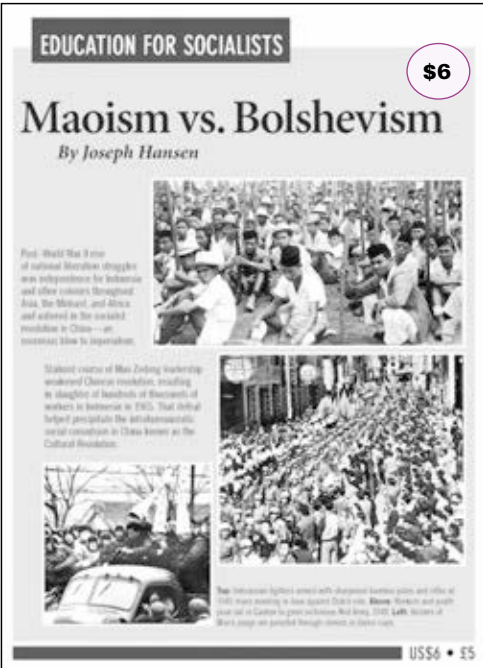
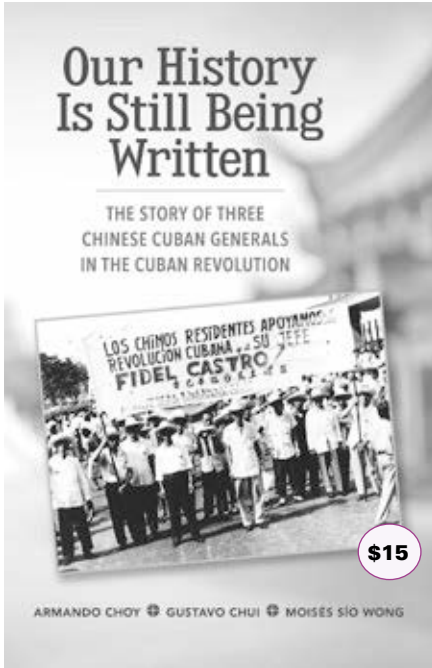
Bosses stated Nov. 24 that the promise of immediate high wages was due to “a technical error” in its computer system. It offered to pay up to 10,000 yuan if discontented workers would just quit and go home. Thousands did.

— BRIAN WILLIAMS

long three-year hiatus, to learn and exchange views with fellow ISSCO members from around the world. As Ling-chi Wang put it in a letter sent afterward to all participants, ISS-

CO’s international conferences provide “encounters with other people in different countries” and fascinating insights that help us “understand the world.”

Recommended reading . . .



See distributors on page 8 or visit pathfinderpress.com

On eve of WWII, rulers task FBI as Washington's political police

Fifty Years of Covert Operations in the US: Washington's Political Police and the American Working Class by Larry Seigle, Farrell Dobbs and Steve Clark is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for December. It marks the capitalist rulers' decision to turn the FBI into their political police and the historic victory in defense of constitutional rights won in the 1973-88 political and legal campaign waged by the Socialist Workers Party. Today, these freedoms are being violated and the FBI refurbished as the Democrats target Donald Trump, with an eye to battling deepening class struggle to come. The rulers are mounting more assaults on workers, farmers and their organizations. The excerpt is from the introduction. Copyright © 2014 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Above, armed FBI raid Aug. 8 on former President Donald Trump's Florida home. Inset, Sept. 1 press conference by Cuba Solidarity Committee in Puerto Rico hits FBI harassment. Democrats seek to refurbish FBI as political police, targeting working class, opponents of imperialist war.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY STEVE CLARK

The fifteen-year-long battle by the Socialist Workers Party, backed by thousands, resulting in that federal court ruling marked a victory for the working class. Moreover, that victory stands and has a direct effect to this day, more than four decades after the suit was filed. ...

Fifty Years of Covert Operations in the US points to the century-and-a-half-long proletarian course that made possible what the Socialist Workers Party accomplished through its political cam-

paign to expose government spying and harassment and mobilize opposition to it. From the moment the SWP led its lawsuit in 1973 through the 1981 trial and post-trial proceedings, the article says, the government

kept trying to prove that the party said one thing in public and something different in its closed meetings. They tried to establish that the party maintained dual structures, one for public purposes and the other hidden from view. In every case, the facts showed the opposite. While a workers' party has the right, in fact the responsibility, to protect the privacy of its members and supporters from the bosses and the police, it has no right to keep its ideas, methods, and organizational concepts hidden from working people. ...

As the trial demonstrated, the FBI's accusations of conspiracy and hidden goals were *pure projection*. It turned out to be the White House and FBI, not the SWP, that conceal their aims and methods. It turned out to be the White House and FBI, not the SWP, that maintain a covert structure to carry out what they cannot openly proclaim. It turned out to be the White House and FBI, not the SWP, that rely on conspiratorial modes of operation to achieve their goals behind the backs of the people of the United States.

The article traces the expansion of Washington's political police since US

imperialism's repressive response, in the aftermath of World War I, to the Bolshevik-led October 1917 revolution in Russia and forging of the Communist International two years later — and their impact on workers and farmers in the United States who sought to emulate those revolutionary examples. The government's aim above all was to crush the newborn communist organizations in the US founded in 1919. (Already in those years, J. Edgar Hoover headed the Justice Department cop agency that targeted communist and anarchist workers, their organizations, and Black leaders such as Marcus Garvey and A. Philip Randolph. That agency became the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1935, and Hoover remained its director until his death in 1972.)

This book puts a special focus on the Democratic administration of President Franklin Roosevelt in the late 1930s, as the US rulers prepared to enter the imperialist slaughter of World War II. It describes the growth and consolidation of the "national security" state in the wake of Washington's military, political, and economic victory in that war over its imperialist rivals, both "foes" (Germany, Austria, Italy, and Japan) and "allies" (the United Kingdom, France, and others).

The 1941 conviction and imprisonment of eighteen leaders of the Socialist

Workers Party and class-struggle Teamsters leadership in Local 544-CIO in Minneapolis was a turning point in the buildup of US capital's political police. The frame-up was the Roosevelt administration's first use of the Smith "Gag" Act outlawing advocacy of revolutionary ideas, which the Democratic president had signed into law the previous year. The real "crime" of these working-class leaders was that they were effectively organizing political opposition within the unions to Roosevelt's drive to whip up popular support for the US rulers' war aims that workers and farmers would be sent to fight and die for. ...

During the 1981 trial of the SWP's lawsuit, a chief government witness, Robert Keuch, an associate deputy attorney general, was questioned by an attorney for the SWP about Roosevelt's 1939 executive order directing the FBI to step up its "investigation" of "subversive activities." Keuch replied that "there are simply ways that individuals and groups can act that may not necessarily constitute violations of the criminal statutes" (translation: that are legal even under US bourgeois law). The White House was concerned first and foremost about those "who were trying to influence public opinion to keep the United States out of war, to keep us neutral," the Justice Department official testified.

The "crime" of "trying to influence public opinion" about the coming war was sufficient for Roosevelt to shred the Bill of Rights. ...

Each step toward putting an end to the ability of the propertied rulers to legally operate in secrecy is an advance for working people in the U.S. ...

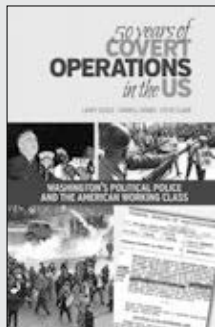
For communist workers, defending ourselves is not primarily a question of legal arguments and courtroom tactics, although revolutionary-minded workers approach these matters with the utmost proletarian discipline and attention to detail.

Like everything else in the class struggle, how working people defend ourselves in face of frame-ups and other government assaults is above all a *political* question. It is part of the working class advancing along the revolutionary course toward replacing the state power of a tiny minority of propertied families — the dictatorship of capital — with that of the great majority, workers and farmers.

December BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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Paris: BP 10130, 75723 Paris Cedex 15. Email: militant.paris@gmail.com

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ENGLAND: **London:** 5 Norman Road (first floor). Seven Sisters. Post code: N15 4ND. Tel: 020-3538 8900. Email: cllondon@fastmail.fm **Manchester:** 329, Royal Exchange Buildings, 3 Old Bank St. Post code: M2 7PE. Tel: (0161) 312-8119. Email: clmanchr@gmail.com

Defend right to strike! Support rail workers!

Working people have every interest in backing the struggle of rail workers against the attacks of the bosses and opposing government intervention aimed at crippling their use of union power.

Both President Joseph Biden and Speaker Nancy Pelosi seek to turn workers and farmers against rail workers, undermine solidarity with their struggle and weaken our unions. The Democrats’ strike-breaking operation has widespread Republican support.

Biden and Pelosi claim Congress must ban rail workers from striking because that would hurt other workers. They say a strike would put hundreds of thousands out of a job, prevent millions from getting groceries and medicine and hinder farmers from feeding their livestock.

In fact, a strike would give rail workers the maximum leverage to make gains against the relentless attacks of the bosses and set a precedent that would strengthen the labor movement and all workers. It’s *bosses*, not workers, who throw workers out of jobs. Democrats act as if workers sacrificing is the only way to prevent a strike. But bosses could stop a rail strike simply by granting the workers’ just demands.

Since 2017 railroad owners have cut jobs by 20%, slashing crew sizes and making the railroads more dangerous.

Long before rail workers started this contract fight, working farmers faced a squeeze from the owners of seed, fertilizer, agricultural implements and food processing monopolies, as well as the banks. These companies boost farmers’ production costs and limit the prices they get for their produce. A successful fight by rail workers would put a stronger ally at the service of the battles of working farmers.

Congress is not intervening in the interests of workers. It’s defending the bosses and their drive for profits at our expense. The contract imposed by Congress has already been voted down by rail workers. It doesn’t address crucial questions: livable schedules and hours, increasingly dangerous working conditions, time off when needed, paid sick days and an end to onerous attendance policies.

The rail workers’ fight is the fight of all workers and our unions! Shutting down production and transportation is the one power workers have. It shouldn’t be dependent on capitalist laws or congressional votes. Defend — and use — the right to strike!

SWP launches campaign for mayor of Chicago

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ed, including the fight rail workers are waging against both the bosses and the government for livable schedules, safer conditions and the right to strike; United Auto Workers on strike at Case New Holland in Racine, Wisconsin, who are planning a solidarity rally there Dec. 17 that the SWP campaign is building; and the strike by BCTGM members at Ingredion in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

“Employment is a central question facing working people in Chicago and beyond,” Gersh said. “We need a union-led fight for *jobs*, with wages, hours and schedules that mean workers can be with their families and be politically active, rather than be torn apart by the bosses’ drive for profits.

“Workers shouldn’t have to hold down two or three jobs to make ends meet, nor be forced into dependency on welfare programs that create barriers to finding work. Our unions should fight for a basic income for all families, to make it possible to keep a job, be part of the working class and strengthen our solidarity and confidence in our own capacities.

“This course of union struggle is the opposite of the handout promoted by Lightfoot as a so-called universal basic income,” Gersh added. Earlier this year the city of Chicago selected 5,000 families by lottery to receive \$500 per month for one year to see if that will reduce “poverty.”

“The labor movement needs to fight for a nationwide government-funded public works program, to create

jobs and build and produce things that working people need,” the SWP candidate said. “Instead, city and state officials here are promoting marijuana dispensaries and ever more gambling casinos as ‘economic development.’ This will just drive more working people in the city and countryside alike into economic crisis and the scourge of drug, alcohol and gambling addiction.”

City officials have made a show of “welcoming” 3,600 asylum-seekers who have been bused here by the government in Texas, using it to score partisan points against the Republicans. “What’s needed is a fight for amnesty for all immigrants in the U.S.,” she said, “in order to strengthen the unity of the working class and our ability to organize, build unions and fight together.”

“To be able to carry out these struggles, working people need to defend constitutional freedoms that are under a concerted assault by the Democrats and the FBI today,” Gersh said.

Gersh and her campaign supporters will join in fights in the interests of working people worldwide, including against Moscow’s assault on the independence of the courageous Ukrainian people and the protests by workers and youth in Iran today.

The mayoral election is scheduled for Feb. 28. If no candidate receives a majority of votes, there will be a runoff between the top two April 4. To find out more and get involved, contact the campaign office at 1858 W. Cermak Road, 2nd Floor, Chicago, IL 60608. Tel.: (312) 792-6160. Email: SWPChicago@fastmail.fm.

Moscow forced deadly 1932-33 famine on Ukraine

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Ukrainians are commemorating the 90th anniversary of the 1932-33 Holodomor, which literally means killing by hunger. Millions starved to death across the Soviet Union as the counterrevolutionary Stalinist regime in Moscow imposed forced collectivization on the peasantry, measures carried out with special brutality in Ukraine.

Ukrainians, Jews, Tatars and other ethnic minorities across Central Asia and the Caucasus region had long been oppressed under czarism. They couldn’t use their native language, practice their religion or control their cultural, economic and political affairs.

With the victory of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, self-determination for all the oppressed nationalities, who had revolted against czarist tyranny, was championed by V.I. Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Ukrainian workers and farmers were among those who formed their own voluntary Soviet Socialist Republic, expanding use of their language, history and culture.

After Lenin’s death, Joseph Stalin consolidated a political counterrevolution against this communist

course, driving working people out of politics and imposing Moscow’s control, crushing Ukrainians’ national aspirations. The Stalinist regime executed thousands of writers and officials who Lenin had led to advance the “Ukrainization” of Ukraine.

In 1929 Stalin launched forced collectivization of the countryside. This shattered the working-class alliance with the peasants, the backbone of the revolution, and devastated agriculture.

The brutality of these measures against the peasants was severest in Ukraine, as Moscow was determined to crush the Ukrainian people’s aspirations for self-determination. Some 3.5 million starved to death there.

To meet Moscow’s impossible quotas for grain requisitions, peasants were robbed of their harvests, leaving nothing to sell or even eat. Backed by the death penalty, this produced famine across the Soviet Union.

Leon Trotsky, who led the fight to continue Lenin’s political course, said in 1939 that a source of the “irreconcilable hostility of the Ukrainian masses” to the Soviet bureaucracy was “the suppression of Ukrainian independence.”

Ukraine independence

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the start of the war. Their actions were brutally suppressed, but opposition to the occupation ran deep.

When Russian soldiers arrived at the Tropinka Hospital they ordered Dr. Leonid Remiga, the chief physician, to take down the Ukrainian flag. “You can shoot me if you want, but I’m not going to do it,” he replied. They left with the flag still up. The staff held off further incursions by Russian forces by feigning a COVID-19 outbreak at the hospital.

After more frustrating visits, Moscow’s forces assaulted Remiga and told him he was to be replaced as head doctor. He suffered a stroke. Hospital staff insisted on holding him for treatment and, with the help of his replacement, he kept running the hospital from his sickbed. When occupying forces finally gained the upper hand in the city, Remiga had to go underground.

As time passed, droves of Russian soldiers turned up at the hospital asking for doctors to diagnose them with ailments to get sent home. Andriy Koksharov, head of the trauma unit, readily signed the requests. “I was ready to sign it for the whole army,” he said.

Soldiers’ mothers protest in Russia

Putin held a televised meeting Nov. 25 with mothers of Russian soldiers who were handpicked to ensure none expressed any opposition to his war. Soldiers’ mothers who have protested the treatment of their sons, including leaders of the widely respected Council of Mothers and Wives, were placed under surveillance and excluded from the much-heralded event.

Making a show of “sharing the pain,” Putin was trying to counter the outcry against the Kremlin’s handling of the war. He told the carefully selected women present that news of Russian battlefield losses are “fake,” and reiterated his regime’s intention to achieve its goals. Putin claims Ukraine has no right to exist.

Since Moscow’s national draft of 300,000 in September, the war’s deadly impact has reached into thousands of homes. Casualties among newly mobilized men have mounted.

“Do you have enough courage to look into our eyes — openly, in a meeting with women that weren’t hand-picked for you?” Olga Tsukanova, a leader of the council, told Putin in a video. “We expect an answer from you. Are you going to keep hiding from us?”

Mothers and wives of soldiers in Russia have long had a well-earned reputation for organizing opposition to the deadly consequences of the regime’s wars. In the 1994-96 war in Chechnya, as well as in Moscow’s earlier war in Afghanistan, mothers initiated protests and collected signatures across Russia to demand their sons be brought home. They led a march to the Chechen capital, Grozny.

Despite serious efforts to muzzle them today, soldiers’ relatives continue to speak out. The Council of Mothers and Wives held a news conference in Moscow Nov. 20 where many told their stories. Yelena Kostina said her nephew was sent from the Lipetsk region in western Russia to the front lines only eight days after he was mobilized. Yelena Kalimysheva described how her brother was thrown into battle without any supplies and abandoned by his commanders.

“They have humiliated, deceived and bullied us, so women, we have nothing to be afraid of,” said Tsukanova, whose own son has been drafted. With over 500 members, the council has been flooded with thousands of calls for help from across Russia.

Putin was confronted with protests when he visited Armenia Nov. 23 to attend a summit of the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization, a military bloc that includes the governments of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Demonstrators included recently arrived emigrants from Russia. Since the invasion of Ukraine, Moscow’s authority in Central Asia and the South Caucasus has dwindled as capitalist governments there take their distance from Putin and his war.

“We have nothing against the Russian people — but we do not want to be slaves of the Kremlin,” Yuri Tatyevsky told the Moscow Times at one of three anti-war rallies held during the summit.

‘Militant’ publishing schedule

This is a three-week issue. The next issue will be mailed out December 22.